

VZCZCXRO7893
RR RUEH DU RUEHMR RUEHRN
DE RUEHSA #0139/01 0221502
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 221502Z JAN 08
FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3240
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PRETORIA 000139

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/S

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/21/2018

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [ZI](#) [SF](#)

SUBJECT: EXILED ZIMBABWEANS NCUBE AND MASIIYIWA INTRIGUED,
CAUTIOUS ON THIRD-WAY "UNITED FRONT"

REF: A. HARARE 0016

[1](#)B. 07 PRETORIA 3075

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Don Teitelbaum. Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: The emergence of a "united front" or "third way" opposition force led by former ZANU-PF minister Simba Makoni, if it became reality, would be a positive development for Zimbabwean politics, according to exiled businessmen Trevor Ncube and Strive Masiyiwa. Publisher Ncube enthusiastically embraced the idea of a Makoni challenge to Mugabe in upcoming elections, suggesting that the "united front" would only need 30-45 days to win the presidency. Makoni is the natural choice to lead the movement, although Ncube questioned whether he had the courage to take on Mugabe. Citing Makoni's caution, Ncube put the odds of a "united front" candidate appearing on a ballot at 25 percent. Masiyiwa, who flatly denied any involvement or funding for the initiative, said the "united front" remains more talk than reality. It is being pushed up by Jonathan Moyo and Ibbo Mandaza, neither of whom Masiyiwa trusts. Makoni is not perfect, Masiyiwa said, but is the "best ZANU-PF has to offer." The South African Government respects Makoni and is likely watching this development with interest, but would want to avoid splits in ZANU-PF that would lead to instability. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) PolOff met January 17 in Johannesburg with Trevor Ncube, publisher of the South African weekly the Mail & Guardian and the Zimbabwean newspapers The Standard and Zimbabwean Independent. PolOff separately met Strive Masiyiwa, CEO of telecommunications company Econet, also on January 17. Ncube and Masiyiwa are respected and well-known figures in the Zimbabwean exile business community in South Africa. A recent African Confidential article suggested that both were involved in planning around a third way or "united front" opposition to Mugabe in upcoming Zimbabwean elections.

Ncube Enthusiastic

[1](#)3. (C) Publisher Trevor Ncube said coyly that he was "aware" of discussions about creating "united front" Zimbabwean movement to take on Robert Mugabe in upcoming presidential elections, and expressed strong personal support for the idea. A long-time advocate of a "third way" political force (ref B), Ncube said such a movement would include elements of ZANU-PF, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), civil society, and the churches. "The ground has never been more fertile," Ncube claimed, noting that he had recently spent two weeks in Zimbabwe and could not find a single ZANU-PF

member who supported Mugabe for president. Only three people could lead such a movement, Ncube suggested: Reserve Bank Governor Gideon Gono, former Finance Minister Simba Makoni, or former Trade Minister Nkosanza Moyo. Gono is too cautious to leave Mugabe, believing he could be Mugabe's hand-picked successor. Moyo has been out of the country too long. Makoni has serious weaknesses (see para 4), Ncube explained, but "beggars can't be choosers."

14. (C) Commenting on Makoni's attributes, Ncube said that he is intelligent, experienced, and savvy. He is not as corrupt as most ZANU-PF politicians and has international credibility. On the negative side, Ncube claimed that Makoni is arrogant, thinks he has all the answers, is difficult to work with, and lacks the common touch; Ncube jokingly compared Makoni to South African President Thabo Mbeki, who is accused of many of the same faults. Makoni is an Qis accused of many of the same faults. Makoni is an intellectual, not a politician, and would need training on how to address rallies and to campaign. Makoni is also very cautious, which led Ncube -- despite all his enthusiasm -- to conclude that the odds of the "united front" actually putting forward a presidential candidate were "perhaps 25 percent."

15. (C) Asked if enough time remained to build a new political movement before March elections, Ncube stated optimistically that "you only need 30 or 45 days to make this happen." A focused campaign, "properly resourced," would generate lots of excitement. Mugabe would have less time to "energize" his security forces, and many of those would support the new movement, especially if Solomon Mujuru was involved. South Africa would welcome the creation of a "united front," if it was a "genuinely Zimbabwean" initiative, and not the creation of the U.K. or the U.S.

16. (C) Ncube has no faith in Morgan Tsvangirai's ability to

PRETORIA 00000139 002 OF 002

lead the country. He harshly criticized the MDC, saying it was a "tired and contaminated brand." Ncube personally would vote for ZANU-PF before the MDC, and believes that many educated Zimbabweans would do the same. If a "united front" political force emerged, Ncube hopes Tsvangirai would support that candidate and "gracefully" step aside.

Masiyiwa Guarded, Intrigued

17. (C) A reserved Strive Masiyiwa said he was "intrigued" by the rumors of a "united front" political movement, but was extremely cautious. Masiyiwa flatly denied that he has funded or supported the "united front" and said that he personally called Patrick Smith, editor of Africa Confidential, to complain about the story linking him to the

SIPDIS
new movement.

18. (C) Despite his caution, Masiyiwa noted that if Simba Makoni could be persuaded to run for president, it would be a "positive" development. Makoni is sober, intelligent, and is probably the best ZANU-PF has to offer at this stage. However, like Ncube, Masiyiwa doubts that Makoni has the courage to put himself forward against Mugabe. At this stage, the "united front" is more a "virtual party" than a real one, with a handful of people trying to create excitement around the idea, led by Jonathan Moyo and Ibbo Mandaza. Both Moyo and Mandaza are former Central Intelligence Organization (CIO) operatives, according to Masiyiwa, who does not trust either one. Their interests are not the Zimbabwean people, but rather themselves.

19. (C) Should the "united front" emerge, Masiyiwa believes that the pro-Senate MDC faction led by Arthur Mutambara and Welshman Ncube would quickly join Makoni, but that

Tsvangirai's faction (or most of it) would not. The "united

SIPDIS

front" could potentially split the opposition vote and help Mugabe more than hurt him, although Masiyiwa admitted that it could also split the ZANU-PF vote.

Comment

¶10. (C) We agree with Ncube that the South African Government may be open to the emergence of a "united front" movement in Zimbabwe, which would include the more pragmatic elements of ZANU-PF. Simba Makoni is well-regarded in Pretoria, and is particularly close to ForMin Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma. A "united front" victory would presumably accomplish Pretoria's key goals in Zimbabwe: removing the obstinate Mugabe from power, keeping the government in ZANU-PF hands, and restoring some coherence to the country's economic management. However, like Ncube and Masiyiwa, Pretoria will be cautious, and would want to ensure that the emergence of such a force will not create political instability or violence, particularly among the security forces.

¶11. (C) Zimbabwean exiles in South Africa, who uniformly detest Mugabe, will be watching the "third way" reports with interest. Many of the educated elite living in South Africa, epitomized by Ncube, have nothing but disdain for the MDC, and no respect for Morgan Tsvangirai (although Tsvangirai has broad support among the unemployed and working class Zimbabwean diaspora). The elites believe change can only come through ZANU-PF or a ZANU-PF spin-off like the "united front." Others, like Masiyiwa, are more balanced, recognizing Tsvangirai's many weaknesses and lack of intellectual depth but noting that he is the face of opposition politics in Zimbabwe. Tsvangirai should become president, they suggest, not because he is the best choice, Qpresident, they suggest, not because he is the best choice, but because he represents a step toward long-term democratic change.

BOST